

Could California Dried Plums Be The Next Kale?



THE WHOLE PACKAGE.

CHEFS AND NUTRITIONISTS SEE STRONG POSSIBILITIES

Sacramento, Calif.—December 17, 2014— Food trend prognosticators cite multiple reasons for the meteoric rise in popularity of kale in recent years, but most agree that the leafy green benefitted from being a ‘superfood’ and a versatile culinary ingredient. Both chefs and nutritionists got behind kale—formerly a wallflower in the vegetable world —and catapulted it to culinary stardom. The same forces are currently gathering behind dried plums (aka prunes), and it’s not a stretch to think that it might be this ‘superfruit’s’ day in the sun.

Chefs throughout the world have long used dried plums in both sweet and savory dishes. These culinary artists often use dried plums to balance other flavors in stews, meat entrées, stuffed pork loin, among other delicious fare. For years, dried plum purée has been used to improve the texture of baked goods, giving brownies, muffins and rolls a moist taste while reducing fat. This trend isn’t slowing down anytime soon.

California Bakery is thriving amid a weak economy in Italy. Maybe it’s because the bakery specializes in breads, cakes and bagels with prunes. Yes, bagels. Not historically Roman fare. Or is it because the Golden State has such strong brand appeal? From its pioneering food trends to deep agricultural roots to laid-back surfers, even the Italians want to do a bit of California dreaming and see what the fuss is all about.

The use of dried plums is exploding in interesting ways. Dried plums are being spotted on the menus of some of the trendiest restaurants in foodcentric cities across the country, like San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Austin, Brooklyn, Washington D.C., and New York. At the quaint Gitane in San Francisco, Chef Jason Tuley stuffs dried plums with goat cheese and wraps them in prosciutto with a citrus gastrique and calls these appetizers, bonbons. New York City neighborhood favorite Brooklyn Steak Co. uses prunes as a reduction sauce in its tongue-in-cheek dinner entrée to give it a sweet and sour taste. Russian restaurant Mari Vanna, known as the Washington Capitals’ hockey player Alex Ovechkin’s favorite hot spot, offers a beet salad with walnuts and dried plums.

“The main reason I love California dried plums is that they are a link from later summer to early fall, especially in Northern California. I like cooking with them because they add a very savory component to the dish without trying to compete with the main flavors,” says [AQ Chef and Owner, Mark Liberman](#). “They also have so much flavor that a little bit goes a long way.”

AQ, based in San Francisco, was named among the top new restaurants in 2012 by Bon Appétit magazine. On their menu they used California dried plums for the crudité appetizer. They are served with seared venison and variety of fall vegetables and fruits such as persimmon, pomegranate, radishes and quince. Liberman mixes the dried plums with red verjus and purées them with red wine vinegar, salt and Dijon mustard. This crudité has a unique taste and is a natural hit among finicky foodies in the Bay Area.

These innovative recipes being developed by chefs across the country or even simpler fare with dried plums can easily be replicated at home to enhance everyday cooking. Adding chopped dried plums to salads, oatmeal or Greek yogurt adds a dose of nutritional value and delicious taste to your meals. Creating a [dried plum purée](#) serves as a natural fat replacement to reduce calories (one serving is four to five dried plums and are less than 100 calories) without losing flavor or texture. You might even agree that it improves it.

Beyond culinary benefits, what could propel this treasured dried fruit into star status is the solid nutrition story backed by research, making them a likeable choice by dietitians. “California dried plums are a flavorful and wholesome food ingredient. I’m so pleased dried plums are finally getting the recognition they deserve because they have always been one of my favorites,” explains [Director of Sports Nutrition at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and Team Sports Dietitian for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Leslie Bonci MPH, RD, CSSD, LDN](#).

“I’ve always recommended them to my professional and collegiate athletes and clients. It’s a given that you can easily replace other ingredients with prunes but people don’t realize how many culinary benefits they offer. Plus, I eat them straight out of the bag. Dried plums are affordable, convenient, portable and always available. It doesn’t get any better than this natural bite-size nugget of goodness.”

Using dried plum purée, Bonci created these [Plumkins](#), a healthier muffin, but still flavorful. Dried plums are naturally sweet and low in fat and sodium, plus cholesterol free and a source of potassium and fiber. Research also suggests dried plums help support healthy bones. [A clinical trial](#) found that dried plums improve bone mineral density (BMD) in post-menopausal women, and additional research found that dried plums restore bone in animal models of hormone deficiency-related osteoporosis and restore bone loss due to normal aging. . . . In addition, dried plums may also help reduce LDL cholesterol and promote digestive health. . . . Another health benefit of dried plums is they help promote satiety, or feelings of fullness, while also helping to keep blood sugar levels stable .

The California Dried Plum Board (CDPB) has launched [EatDriedPlums.com](#) [[link to Eatdriedplums.com](#)], an educational resource featuring a short video series, for consumers to watch the story of plum to package, learn about the nutritional benefits of dried plums and be inspired by their many culinary uses. For more information on California dried plums and recipe ideas, visit [CaliforniaDriedPlums.org](#) and follow CDPB on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#).

California Dried Plum Board (CDPB): The CDPB represents 900 dried plum growers and 26 dried plum packers under the authority of the California Secretary of Food and Agriculture. Revered as part of California’s rich history, the dried plum remains a vital player in California’s economic wealth. California produces 99 percent of the United States’ and 42 percent of the world’s supply of dried plums, a convenient, healthy snack for today’s busy lifestyle. Leslie Bonci, MPH, RD, CSSD, LDN, is a spokesperson for the CDPB. California Bakery has a partnership with the California Prune Board (Europe) Research studies were partially funded by the CDPB and California dried plums were provided to participants. Learn more at [www.californiadriedplums.org](#).

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